

EFP starts three-year international campaign

Gum Health Day 2026

What do healthy gums have to do with cardiovascular health, diabetes, and everyday well-being? More than most people realise. These connections highlight why oral health should no longer be seen as separate from overall health. The mouth is the window on the body, says the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP).

In 2026, Gum Health Day is celebrated on 12 May, and is the launch of a new global campaign designed to place oral health at the centre of the whole health conversation, empowering people to take control of their well-being.

This initiative by the European Federation of Periodontology, led by its communication & engagement committee, marks the start of a three-year international campaign under the motto "Gum Health Day: Empowering Lives." It aims to raise awareness of the importance of healthy gums, encourage early action at the first signs of problems, and make prevention a key part of everyday life.

"Gum diseases are among the most common health conditions worldwide. They often begin silently, with symptoms such as bleeding gums or persistent bad breath that are easy to ignore," explains Prof. Spyros Vassilopoulos, EFP past president and chair of the federation's communication & engagement committee.

Left untreated, they can lead to tooth loss but have also been linked to broader health issues. Yet they are largely preventable with good daily care and regular dental check-ups.

Severe gum disease is a major global health issue, affecting more than one billion people worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, oral diseases, including periodontitis, affect approximately 3.7 billion people globally.

Gum disease may affect much more than your mouth

There is growing scientific evidence which suggests that gum disease is linked to several serious health conditions. Studies have found connections between periodontitis and cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks, heart failure, and stroke.

The impact is also significant for people with diabetes. Those who have both diabetes and gum disease are more likely to develop severe complications affecting the eyes and kidneys and face a higher risk of death compared with people with diabetes alone. Gum disease can also affect women differently from men, par-

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ticularly during hormonal changes such as puberty, pregnancy, and menopause. Some studies have also suggested a possible association between periodontitis and breast cancer, and research has also found a link between gum disease and erectile dysfunction.

"Healthy gums support quality of life, confidence, and long-term health, yet gum diseases are still widely underestimated," explains Prof. Vassilopoulos. "They influence how people feel, live, and engage with everyday life. The Gum Health Day campaign helps raise awareness and make the link of good gum health to overall well-being."

For more information about the campaign and how to get involved, visit efp.org/gumhealthday.

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About the European Federation of Periodontology

The EFP is a global non-profit organisation with a European core, that promotes periodontal science and awareness of gum health among oral health professionals, other medical professionals, policy makers and the public. Founded in 1991, the EFP brings together 47 national societies, representing more than 18,000 oral health professionals and researchers from six continents. The EFP's vision is "Better oral health for all."

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